

2017 CASEWORK REPORT

Rep. Pramila Jayapal | Washington's 7th Congressional District

JULY 2017

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What We Do

Constituent services are a crucial part of the work in Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal's Seattle office. Caseworkers in the Seattle office help constituents with problems or requests they may have with federal agencies.

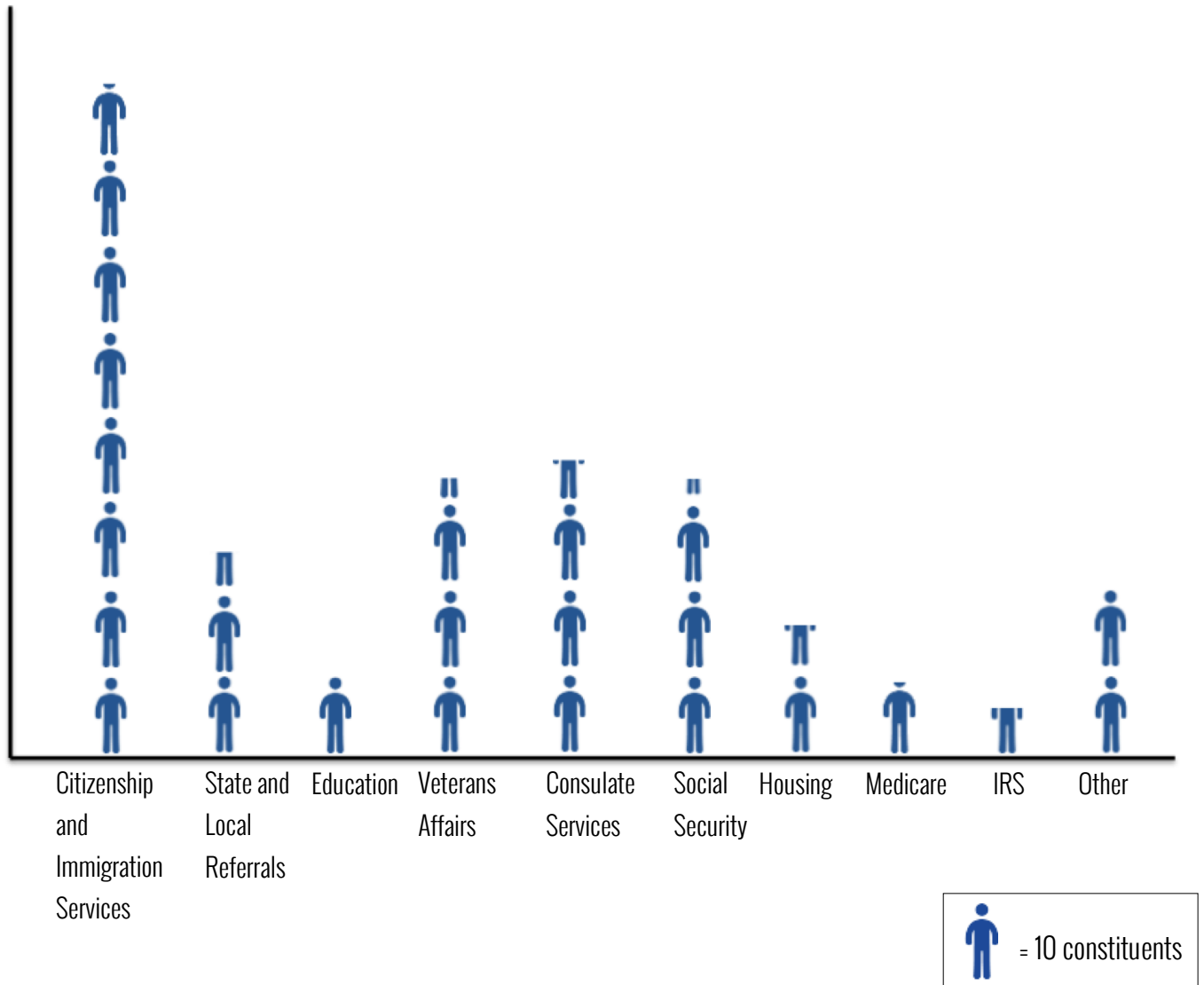
During the first six months of the 115th Congress, Jayapal's office already helped over 250 constituents in the 7th Congressional District, saving them over \$86,000 by sorting out Social Security problems, federal disability filings, Internal Revenue Service difficulties and veterans' benefits. The office has also assisted dozens of constituents with navigating immigration issues including visas, citizenship and employment.

The July 2017 casework report highlights stories of some of the constituents Jayapal's office has helped over the last six months. These constituents came to Jayapal's Seattle office with problems that ran the gamut. Caseworkers in the office worked with the appropriate federal agencies to resolve these issues.

Jayapal's district office is focused on helping constituents cut through the red tape, solve problems and answer any questions. **Constituents in need of assistance are encouraged to contact the Seattle office by calling 206-674-0040 or going to Jayapal's website at <https://jayapal.house.gov/services/help>**

Casework Breakdown

So far this year, Jayapal's office has taken on 260 cases regarding everything from identity theft to timely postal service. Caseworkers have successfully closed out 129 cases and are currently processing 131. Here is what the caseload has looked like thus far:



Casework Testimonials

In helping over 250 constituents with a variety of services, Congresswoman Jayapal's office met a lot of people with interesting, inspiring and personal stories to share. Below are a select few accounts from the 7th District community on how Jayapal's casework changed constituents' situations for the better.

IDENTITY THEFT

Lucienne Weatherwax from West Seattle

As Lucienne Weatherwax prepared for retirement, she discovered that someone had been cashing checks for Medicare and Social Security benefits in her name. Lucienne spent over a year attempting to reset her benefits, but when her retirement date arrived and the issue had not been resolved, she reached out to our office for help. We worked with Social Security to get her record cleaned, secure her retirement benefits, activate her Medicare coverage and facilitate communication with her supplemental insurer about when that coverage should start.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Kathleen Braden from Northwest Seattle



Constituent Kathleen Braden

After Kathleen Braden retired, her paperwork was caught up in the Social Security system and her income was suspended for eight months. When Kathleen called us, we took action.

"The idea that a person serving in Congress is a constituent's 'representative' really hit home for me this year when I needed assistance with the Social Security Administration from Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal. When I tried to change my status for receiving Social Security benefits after my retirement, it set me off on a ten-month journey to navigate the Social Security system. Because the paperwork was so complex, and several times my documents were lost by SSA, what I thought would be my monthly income did not finally arrive until eight months after I was due to receive it. I spent many hours on the telephone and on the government web pages, and days of in-person visits to the Social Security office. While the Social Security staff who tried to

help me were very polite, I still felt that the system was this huge monster that held all the power over my monthly budget and that no one was on my side.

“I decided to call the Congresswoman's office with a message of ‘help!’ Once I did that, her staff went into action and the logjam was broken. Within a few weeks, I had contact with workers in SSA who were very responsive and I finally started receiving my benefits. What I learned from the experience is that sometimes you do indeed need a ‘representative’ who cares about helping a person navigate the maze that makes up the federal government. I am grateful to Congresswoman Jayapal and her staff for being at my side.”

Cheryl Niemann from North Seattle

Our staff met Cheryl Niemann at a Mobile Office Hours event in North Seattle. She had been receiving conflicting information from Social Security regarding the retirement benefits she would be receiving, making her concerned that she would receive far less in benefits than she had planned for. Through an inquiry from our office, Cheryl received more clarity on the complicated web of Medicare payments and work limits that factored into her awarded retirement income.

MEDICARE

Richard Berk from Fremont

Richard is a low-income senior who works at the Ballard Food Bank as part of the AARP Senior Community Service Employment Program. When he contacted us, he was struggling to pay his Medicare Part B premiums and cover the cost of medication for diabetes and kidney failure. He had applied for Special Help, a state program that reduces the cost of medications under Medicare, but the state agency determined that his income was too high to qualify. Our office contacted Medicare who determined that they were erroneously counting Richard's volunteer work as a source of income. Richard has now been enrolled in Extra Help, which will reduce his premiums down to half the price and lower co-pays on medication.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Michael Brunstad from Magnolia

Michael, a Vietnam veteran, contacted our office regarding the difficulties he has been having in receiving his combat-related bronze star from the 1960s. Michael had been trying to get ahold of these medals, awarded for valor, for 50 years and our office



Constituent Michael Brunstad and Jayapal staffer Raman Khanna

was able to attain copies of Michael's medals within one month of making the initial inquiry.

Kevin Lewis from Northgate

Kevin, a terminally ill veteran, contacted our office because he was having extreme difficulty in receiving end of life care from the local veterans hospital. Kevin filled out a form asking for help on Monday and by Wednesday he had his medical appointment scheduled.

"As a terminally ill veteran, we need someone as conscientious and helpful as you to turn to when the system gets so clogged up that we get lost! "

DISABILITY

Fred Braggs from Capitol Hill

Fred Braggs is a Veteran whose PTSD and acute body pain prevent him from working. We worked with Social Security to secure him two years of owed back payments for Social Security disability benefits totaling \$14,000. Watch Fred's story [here](#).

Nai Saeteurn from West Seattle

Nai Saeteurn lives with her young son in West Seattle. Her acute body pain and severe depression prevent her from being able to work, making her Social Security Disability benefits check a critical part of their income. After going through an extensive application process, Nai had been approved for disability income, but had been waiting for several months without seeing a check. Our office tracked down her application and ensured it went before the appropriate review branches in a timely manner. Nai was awarded over \$5,000 in back pay and a monthly check of \$800.

Cecilia Romero from Shoreline

Cecilia Romero's daughter was born prematurely this summer, qualifying her family to receive disability income payments for the baby's care. A mix-up routed these payments to a non-existent bank account and the new family had been waiting seven months to reprocess the payment. After reaching out to our office and working with our Social Security contacts, the error was corrected and the payments were redirected to the family.

IMMIGRATION

Seattle International Dance Festival

Visa process puts strain on Seattle International Dance Festival Jayapal's office steps in to help; bulk of events taking place at Broadway Performance Hall - [Capitol Hill Times](#)

Our office helped make sure the Seattle International Dance Festival went on as planned after many of the international artists were unable to receive visas. We worked with federal agencies to expedite the visa process for dancers slated to perform in the festival so that the show could go on.

Ruben Van Kempen from downtown Seattle

When a federal database misidentified Ruben Van Kempen as a non-citizen and threatened his status in the U.S., our office fought to right this wrong. In addition to working with Ruben through our constituent services office, Congresswoman Jayapal took this fight to the House Judiciary Committee, introducing and successfully passing an amendment to bill H.R. 2407 in committee that would provide more oversight to the program that misidentified Ruben.

The amendment requires regular reporting to Congress on the number of instances in which the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program inaccurately denies people access to Medicare and Social Security benefits that they are eligible to receive. H.R. 2407 has yet to go to the House floor for a final vote. In addition, Rep. Jayapal sent a letter of inquiry to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to obtain more information on the specifics of the program and on why this issue occurred in the first place.

“Social Security and Homeland Security would not recognize me as a U.S. Citizen. Your office, the determination to stay on top of the situation, the daily communication, all helped to settle the case. This means that I am once again recognized as a U.S. citizen and am able to collect Social Security and be on Medicare. The caseworkers were in daily communication with me via telephone and email. I have shared and praised your office, the caseworkers and the diligence put into my case.”

Sohyun Park from Hawthorn Hills, Seattle

Sohyun Park needed help from our office on his Employment Authorization Document (EAD) after not receiving a response from USCIS.

“I was waiting for my EAD to be approved and the office helped me by contacting USCIS on behalf of my case. Although the office could not expedite my immigration process, I was grateful that there was someone who was willing to help when I needed. The caseworker was very helpful and supportive throughout the process. I have realized that there are people from the government who are willing to help people in difficult situations.”

Luka Nkiambi from Seattle

Luka Nkiambi came by the office with good news! We pushed for fast visa approval and now he is able to visit his sick mother in Congo.



Arushi Kakkar from South Lake Union

When Arushi Kakkar met our staff at a town hall event on March 6, she was having trouble getting a visa and was worried about being forced to leave the country and give up her work at Amazon. Arushi was kind enough to record this [short video](#) about what happened next.

Sandy Gray from downtown Seattle

Constituent Luka Nkiambi

Sandy Gray was experiencing a delay in the issuance of a permanent residency card. When Sandy called our office, we were able to push for progress.

“I contacted the office to investigate the delay in my permanent residency card issue, which had been delayed for 12 months. The caseworkers were absolutely first class to work with—great communicators, great understanding and great ambassadors for Congresswoman Jayapal... While I appreciate that Congresswoman Jayapal's office must deal with many cases way bigger than an individual's permanent residency card, the team dealt with any question and request with the utmost urgency.”

Emilie Kallen from North Seattle

Emilie Kallen was new to interacting with government offices and called us asking for support on an adoption suspension.

“We needed the Congresswoman's support and signature on a congressional letter to the Ethiopian government regarding a USCIS adoption suspension. I got responses every time I emailed and called, once even after office hours! I had never contacted a government office for any kind of assistance like this, and was pleasantly surprised to find that someone cared about us and worked with us to help...”

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Downtown Seattle residents

The general manager of a high rise in downtown Seattle contacted our office because the U.S. Postal Service had not been delivering packages to this residence for over six months due to an insubordinate mail man. Because of our offices intervention, this issue was resolved and postal service has resumed for 758 units with about 1,200 residents.